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CIA CPAS NID 82-142JX

National Intelligence Daily

Friday
18 June 1982

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ARGENTINA: Leadership Reshuffle

(Information as of 0030 EDT)

[redacted]

Galtieri's resignation yesterday as Commander in Chief and President came after senior officers in the Army withdrew their support for him over the Falklands defeat and over his apparent refusal to agree to a formal end to the conflict. The decision was conveyed to Galtieri by Army Chief of Staff Vaquero, who reportedly declined an offer by the Army's high command to become the new Commander in Chief. The post was subsequently given to the Army's number-three man, Major General Nicolaides, a staunch anti-Communist and opponent of democratization. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Interior Minister Saint Jean has taken over as Interim President in accordance with established procedure. The official Argentine news agency said the new executive would be named shortly after Nicolaides takes command of the Army and meets with Navy Commander Anaya and Air Force chief Lami Dozo. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Lami Dozo is considered by many in Buenos Aires as the leading contender to succeed Galtieri because of his reputation as a moderate and the Air Force's distinguished record in the Falklands conflict. There is some speculation, however, that the position will be rotated among the service chiefs, and some pressure exists to name a civilian to the post. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Among its first decisions, the new regime is said to have agreed to British terms for the repatriation of the first batch of prisoners captured at Stanley, and the transfer reportedly will begin today. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Comment: In addition to his insistence that the war must continue, Galtieri was ousted because of the coverup on the course of the fighting that deceived much

--continued

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of the military and public, and his call for the demonstration on Tuesday that turned violent. The military commanders probably hope that by removing Galtieri now they will contain the growing public and military belief that Argentina's defeat in the Falklands was not honorable and thus be in a better position to manage demands for institutional and political reforms. [redacted] 3.5(c)

The military's move against Galtieri also was aimed at preventing wider criticism of the armed forces as an institution. If Lami Dozo becomes president, the greatly enhanced reputation he and his service gained during the fighting may help insulate the military from the need for further housecleaning. [redacted] 3.5(c)

As president, Lami Dozo--who has a wide array of civilian contacts--would be likely to move rapidly toward giving civilians a major role in the government. He probably would have to find a way to contain the resentment of some Army officers over the accession to power of the Chief of the Air Force and of those opposed to liberalization. Moreover, he or another successor would still have to oversee the surrender and repatriation of Argentine troops and then deal with the thorny question of what to do next on the Falklands issue. [redacted] 3.5(c)

London will be pleased if reports that Galtieri's successors favor a general cease-fire prove accurate. They almost certainly will operate on the assumption that the change in government presents an opportunity for a cease-fire and early repatriation of all prisoners of war and will quickly approach the new leadership to see if these can be arranged. The Thatcher government will worry, however, that confusion in Buenos Aires could still delay an end to hostilities, leaving it with no choice but to hold some Argentines and maintain a costly military presence in the South Atlantic. [redacted]

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